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ABSTRACT

This basic course in writing developed especially for hospital employees is designed to be taught onsite and to complement a hospital's other training and staff development efforts. The topical focus is workplace communication. The course is designed as a 16-hour course, with eight 2-hour sessions. The curriculum guide consists of a list of course goals, list of homework assignments, and informational materials, activities, and exercises for these eight sessions: good writing; audience and purpose; the writing process: overview; the writing process: planning and drafting; the writing process: reviewing; the writing process: revising and editing; writing under pressure; and wrap-up. These readings are provided: Good Writing on the Job; A Model of the Writing Process; Writing Memos and Short Reports; Sample Memos; Tuition Reimbursement Policy; and Performance Appraisal. The teacher's guide explains the philosophy of the course. It lists course goals (including participant role, instructor role, and evaluation) and offers sample lesson plans. Each lesson plan has a brief narrative description of class activities and goals and a time plan. The teacher's guide also describes how teachers can adapt the course to make it more work-related and more responsive to different audiences. Suggestions for recordkeeping conclude the guide. (YLB)

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The Write Stuff:
Memos and Short Reports

An offering of Step *Ahead:*

A Partnership for Improved Health Care Communication

Sponsored by

The Hospitals of New Mexico
and
The Department of English
New Mexico State University

Revised 7/15/92

Write Stuff was developed by Step *Ahead*: A Partnership for Improved Health Care Communication. Step *Ahead* is funded in large part by the U. S. Department of Education as a National Workplace Literacy Demonstration Project. Our other partners include The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy and seventeen hospitals within New Mexico.

Step *Ahead* brings short courses and on-site tutoring to hospitals. Our training project helps health care workers improve their job-related communication and literacy skills. As a demonstration project, we are eager to share our materials with others who are engaged in not-for-profit literacy work. If you would like to use our materials, please write for permission to:

Step *Ahead*
New Mexico State University
Department of English, Box 3E
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88003

505-646-3931

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of our partner organizations and especially wish to thank our many students who told us it really did make a difference.

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Dr. Stephen A. Bernhardt and Dr. Paul R. Meyer, Co-Directors

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Course Plan
The Write Stuff: Memos and Short Reports

Week 1 What is Good Writing?

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Review Writing Assignments
Review Course
Points to Remember (p. 2)
Discussion and Evaluation

The Write Stuff
Course Goals

At the end of this course, participants should:

- feel more comfortable with on-the-job writing
- understand and use a process approach to writing
- be able to choose from several outlining and planning methods
- choose effective language for both reporting and persuasive writing
- revise memos and reports with a clear purpose and an intended audience in mind

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Points to Remember

1.

2.

3.

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10.

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Writing Assignments

Assignment #1

Identify a problem in the way things are done in your work area: a problem that concerns policy. It might involve medical leave, promotions, performance appraisals, sick pay, dress and appearance, overtime, scheduling, or some other policy issue. In a memo to the appropriate hospital employee, describe the policy problem and recommend a better way to do things. You'll need to identify a problem that can be solved by writing. (You may also decide it is necessary to speak to people before writing. Here, however, we will just concentrate on the writing.)

Assignment #2

Write a memo to the appropriate people requesting tuition assistance with a course you would like to take at your local college. A policy statement on tuition reimbursement is contained at the back of this coursebook (page 73). If you prefer, find the appropriate policy at your hospital and use that as your guideline.

Assignment #3

Identify an improvement that could be made in a procedure within your work group. It shouldn't be a matter of policy, but something more immediate. Maybe you have an idea to improve handling of certain substances, or for directing patient inquiries, or for keeping records on incoming calls. In a memo to the appropriate person(s), suggest the improved way of doing things. Consult the appropriate policy manual for your area.

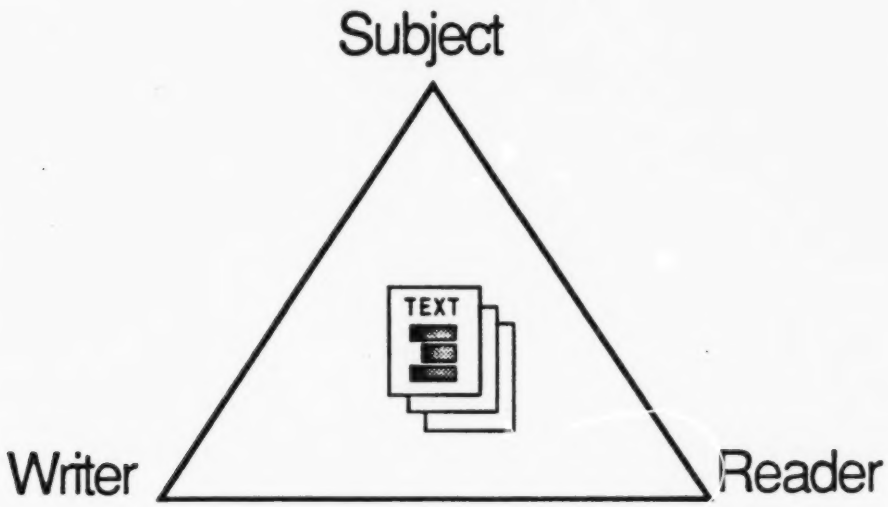
Assignment #4

Do a self evaluation for the past year, addressed to your manager or immediate supervisor. Provide evidence of what you have done well in your job and areas you need to improve.

A sample of the general form used at one hospital for yearly evaluations is included at the end of the course materials. This is to help you think about the categories some managers and supervisors use to rate their staff. You shouldn't try to cover each category or assign numerical ratings to yourself. Just highlight what you have done well, or where you have improved, or what new responsibilities you have undertaken. Think of your report as helping your supervisor to appraise your work.

Exploring the Communication Triangle

Many people find visualizing the communication situation as a triangle to be helpful in thinking about communication tasks:



In this visual representation, the text – what is actually being communicated – is surrounded by those features that shape it. At one corner is the writer, the one who has a message to communicate. The writer sends the message to a reader, who has some reason for wanting to hear the message. Finally, in the third corner is the subject: what the message is about. In writing a text, the writer, the reader, and the subject are closely related, like three corners of the same triangle.

The triangle reminds us that there is frequently more than one perspective on the subject: you understand the subject to be a certain way, but your reader may have a different understanding. To communicate well, you must realize that your reader may have a different view of the situation than you.

The triangle also reminds us that writing always involves a relationship between people; it's one person writing to another person. Writing isn't just passing information around, it's developing relationships. You can spout all the facts that you want, but if you don't give the reader a reason to read, she isn't going to care.

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Asking the Write Questions

Here are some questions that might help you understand a particular writing problem in terms of the Communication Triangle:

The Writer/Reader Relationship

- What is my relationship to the reader?
- Are we close? distant? tense? relaxed?
- Do we share purposes?
- Do I have the authority to ask my reader to do something? Are we members of the same team?

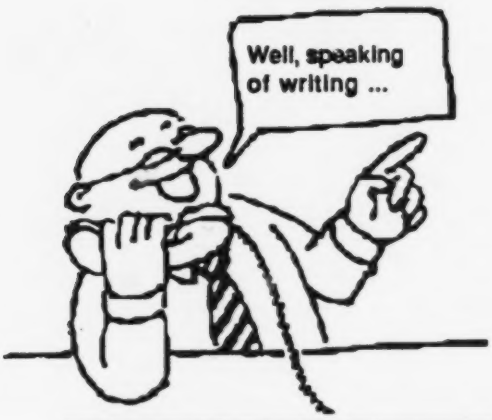
The Writer/Subject Relationship

- What do I really know?
- What do I need to learn?
- Are there other ways of thinking about this situation?
- How do I feel about the subject?

The Reader/Subject Relationship

- What does the reader know?
- How much do I need to tell my reader?
- Does my reader share my beliefs and feelings about the subject?

Speaking vs. Writing



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Purpose and Audience Worksheet

Use these questions to get a clearer picture of your readers and your goals for writing.

Purpose:

- Why am I writing this?
- What do I want the reader to do?
- If the reader were to forget everything else, what one key point do I want remembered?

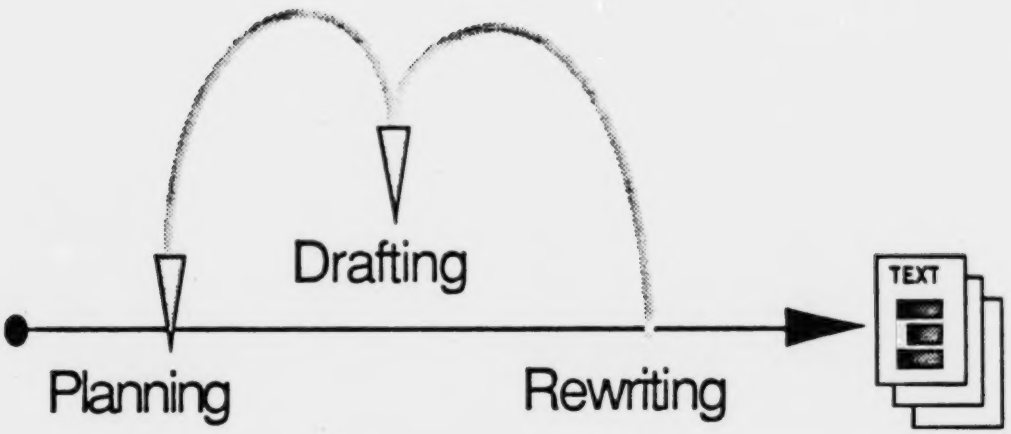
Audience:

- Who is my reader?
- What does the reader know and how does the reader feel about this subject?
- How will the reader use this document?
- What is the reader's style? Should I adjust to it?

Situation and Strategy:

- Should I write this now or later? Should I write or call?
- Should I include deadlines and list any requested actions?
- Am I too late?
- Should someone else communicate this information?

The Writing Process



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Planner/Drafters vs. Drafter/Revisers

Check off behaviors in each column that describe your typical writing behaviors.

Planner/Drafters

- ❒ I tend to make outlines, flowcharts, or diagrams.
- ❒ I think for a long time before I start writing.
- ❒ I like to analyze my audience: who they are, what they want, what they need to do.
- ❒ Once I start writing, it comes out pretty much in final form.
- ❒ The only revising I tend to do is correcting spelling and grammar.
- ❒ It seems to take forever to decide what to write.
- ❒ I spend a long time trying to get started--I often procrastinate.

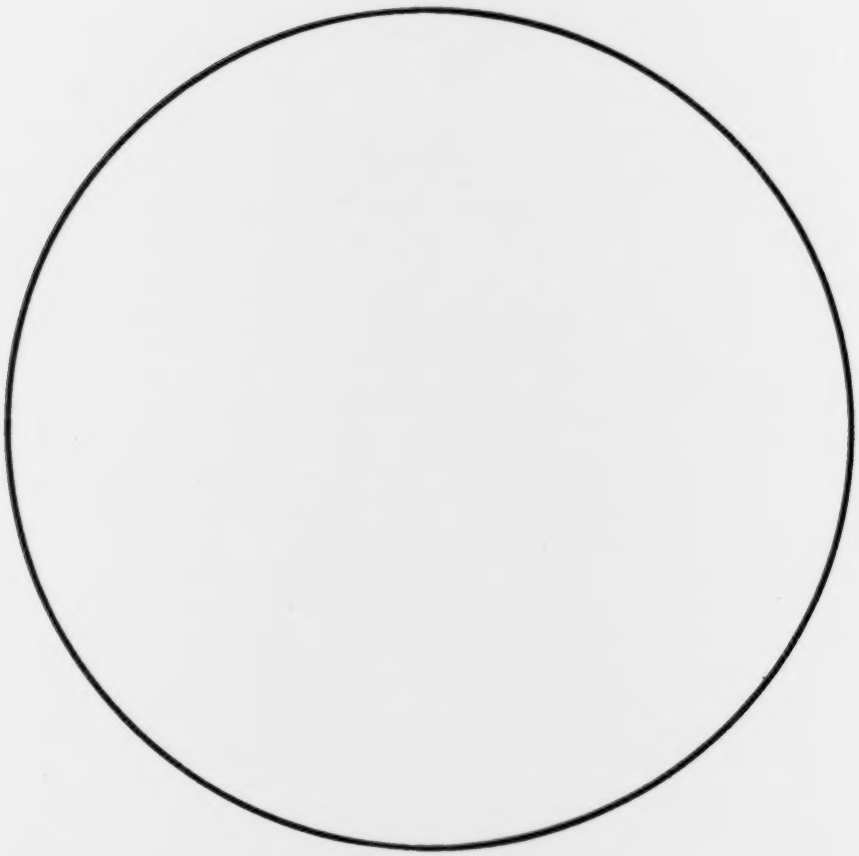
Drafter/Rewriters

- ❒ I like to just start writing.
- ❒ I usually throw away several starts before I am happy.
- ❒ How can I know what I mean until I see what I say?
- ❒ I tend to do major revisions: moving whole sections around, deleting large parts, changing my focus or purpose.
- ❒ I can't seem to stop fiddling--making changes, scratching out sentences, adding information.
- ❒ I tend to lose my train of thought because I keep editing sentences.
- ❒ My desk ends up with a huge messy pile of paper and scraps.

How Do I Spend My Writing Time?

Draw a pie chart to show how you spend your time when you need to write something. You might include time you spend:

- planning: analyzing the situation and gathering information
- organizing: developing outlines or strategies
- procrastinating: cleaning your desk, getting coffee, doing other stuff
- drafting: writing rough first drafts
- rereading, or reading out loud
- revising: reworking and improving the drafts
- editing: correcting grammar, spelling, punctuation



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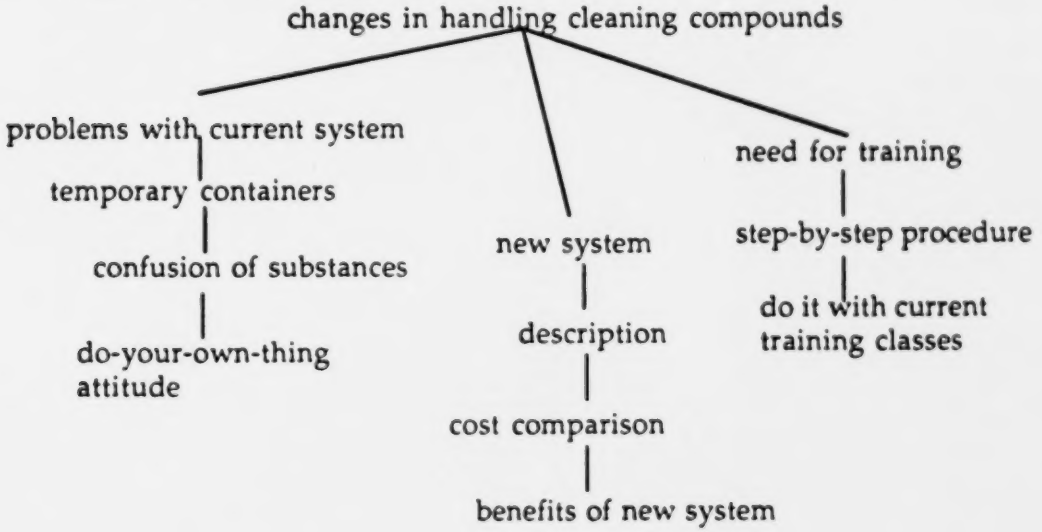
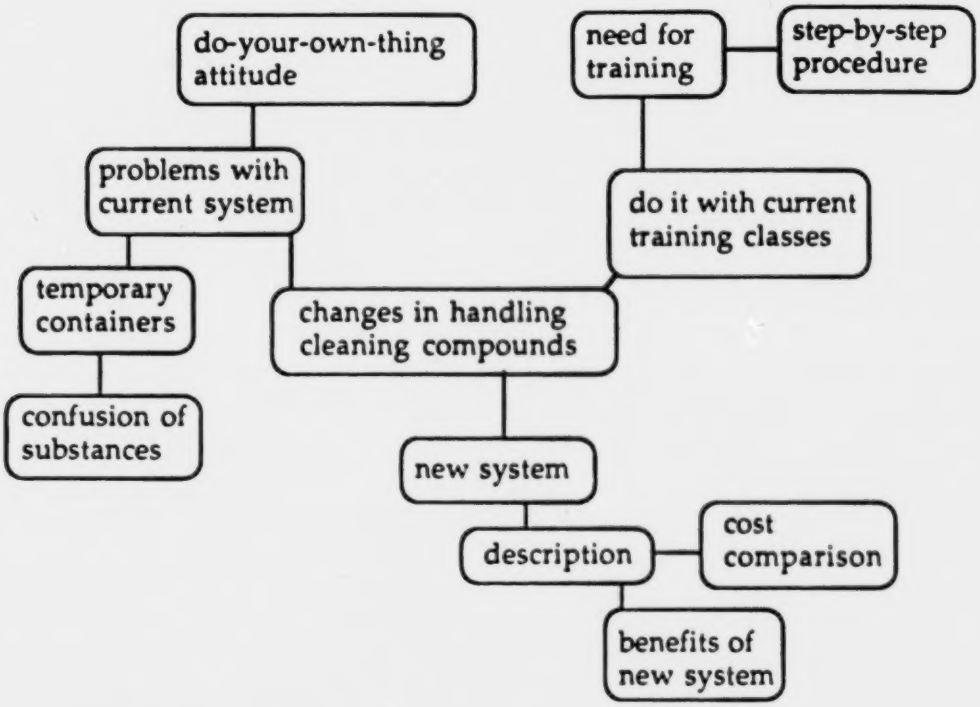
Some Planning Strategies

1. **Brainstorm your topic**: List as many possible ideas, approaches, examples, and strategies as you can. Don't censor yourself--let your writing flow uninterrupted. Then sort and find the good stuff.
2. **Identify Keywords**: Try to identify a single word--a cue or a rich bit--that really captures your problem, your topic, or your task. Or write the headline for your piece of writing.
3. **Imagine different readers' responses**: What would my boss say about this? What would my husband say? What would Sally in the Emergency Room think about this?
4. **Nutshell your topic**: Describe in a sentence or two the purpose and audience of your memo or report. Try to think in terms of *action*--what it is you want to happen. When you state the purpose, state both your purpose and your reader's purpose.
5. **Establish operators**: Don't just state your purpose, but state how you can achieve it. Instead of simply thinking--"I want some help with tuition so I can take some courses"--think *goal* plus *operators*: "I will use the procedures in the policy manual to apply for tuition reimbursement to the personnel manager so that I can afford to take courses in radiation technology at the community college. The courses will be approved because the hospital is likely to need more radiation technologists."
6. **Tree your topic**: Draw an upside-down tree structure that shows what your intend to say or demonstrate.



7. **Cluster your topic:**



8. **Use creative thinking strategies:**
   - Use metaphor or simile: "Getting physicians to sign the orders is like..."
   - Use another language: How would an accountant describe the situation? Or how would an engineer look at this? Or what would an elderly patient say?
   - Examine your subject from different perspectives: How has it changed over time? What is it like? What would it have to have to be something else? What system is it a part of?
9. **Talk about your situation**: Often, just talking about your writing will suggest an approach.
10. **Let your topic simmer on the backburner**: If you can't decide how on a plan for writing, go on to some other activity. Your mind is perfectly capable of working on a problem in the background.
11. When all else fails: **mumble to yourself and stare out the window.**

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Drafting Strategies

1. You might start by putting your outline on paper or on a computer screen with space left between the entries proportional to the amount of text you think each entry will require. Then try grafting your text onto the outline. The outline provides the skeleton for fleshing out your text; so when you get blocked in one section, the outline can serve as a reminder of other sections to work on.
2. For shorter documents, try to get your whole draft done in one sitting, as quickly as you can. For longer documents, see if you can complete a whole section at one sitting. Remind yourself that you're not after perfection, but a quick first draft.
3. Start writing the part that you feel you know the best. There's no obligation to start at the beginning; in fact, the introduction is often the *last* thing you should write. After all, how do you know what you're going to say until you've said it?
4. If you are writing in one section and get an inspiration for another section, quickly jump to that section, write yourself a brief note (you might put square brackets around the note so you can easily search for it later), and then jump back to where you left off.
5. Force yourself to keep going forward, not backward. This is hard, but if you can kick that editing demon off your shoulder while you draft, you may be able to keep up with the composing voice that dictates what to write. (It tends to shut up when the editing demon takes over.) You'll be surprised by how much you have to say about your topic.
6. When you get blocked (and we all do sometimes), try jumping to another section and begin drafting there. (Remember those bracketed notes you left for yourself?) If that doesn't help, go back to the top of your document and read down through what you've already written. That often gets the creative juices flowing again.
7. If you're still blocked, you might seek out a colleague and tell him or her what you're trying to write. You will often talk through the block, and find yourself saying *exactly* what you want to write. It's often a good idea to bring a tape recorder to these sessions to capture your words.
8. If you are still blocked, put the project aside and work on something else. Your mind is perfectly capable of working on the back burner to solve a problem while working on another project at a conscious level. Ideas for the blocked project will come as it simmers on the back burner of your mind.

Revising and Editing Checklist

Revising

- ❒ Is my purpose clearly stated?
- ❒ Is the tone right for my intended audience?
- ❒ Have I included the right amount of detail for the level of understanding I want my audience to have?
- ❒ Is the most important point at the top of the document, or is it strategically placed?
- ❒ Do I request any specific action?
- ❒ Is the overall document organized logically?
- ❒ Does the text flow smoothly from section to section?
- ❒ Is the text visually appealing? Is it inviting, or does it look forbidding?
- ❒ Do I make good use of figures and tables to support my main points?

Editing

- ❒ Have I written complete sentences (not fragments or run-ons)?
- ❒ Do my subjects and verbs agree?
- ❒ Am I using active voice? Do I make it clear *who* is doing *what* to *whom*?
- ❒ Am I consistent in the use of tense, number, person?
- ❒ Have I used correct spelling and punctuation?

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Reviewing The Writing of Others

Being able to review someone else's writing is one of the most important skills a writer can develop. One of the quickest ways to learn about writing is to help others, because that forces us to be readers and writers at the same time. You can use these strategies on your own writing, too. Just change hats as you talk to yourself.

Read:

- Read the document once straight through. Don't mark up the writing, just read as if you were a real reader. Stay in touch with how you feel, where you get confused, where you stumble on sentences.
- Read it a second time, this time making notes or checking areas you think need more work.
- Read it out loud if you really want to hear how it sounds.

Check the revision worksheet:

- Is the purpose clear?
- Does the writer establish connections with the audience?
- Are there enough details?
- Is the document focused and visually attractive?

Feedback:

- Praise two or three specific areas of the document. Don't say, "This is nice." Go the distance: "This paragraph told me exactly what I needed to know at this point," or "This sentence tells me exactly what I ought to do."
- Use positive language. For example, refer to sections that still need revision as areas to improve, not as problems.
- Try to phrase comments with "I" statements and avoid "you" statements. "I needed more evidence here," instead of, "You really lost me on this one."
- Ask the writer to paraphrase or restate unclear passages. Use questions like "Could this section be stated in another way?"
- Be kind and use your imagination. Remember, you're on the writer's side. Your behavior will convince her of that.

Make sure the writer leaves with a sense of purpose:

- Recap the positive and restate the areas that need improvement.
- Allow the writer plenty of time to ask questions and clear up any confusion.
- If it is appropriate, both writer and critic should set a deadline for the next round of revisions.

When the shoe is on the other foot:

- Don't be defensive, listen to the feedback.
- Don't start explaining: "What I meant to say was . . . ." or "The reason I did it that way was . . . ." Don't bother arguing. Just say "Thanks," or "OK, I understand."
- Ask all the questions you can about the document. It is not unusual to discover solutions to writing problems by talking about them.

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Quick Writing Tips

Sometimes you have to complete a piece of writing immediately. When speed is the problem, organization is the solution. On this page you will find three methods that can help you write under pressure. Remember that the reader should always leave your memo or short report knowing what to do.

The Inverted Pyramid

This journalistic method works for many people. The trick is to list what needs to be communicated and then order it according to importance. Informed readers can then scan the document from top to bottom for the information they don't already have, while less informed readers can read the entire document.

- List the information you must cover from most important to least important. Eliminate all unnecessary information.
- Start writing the most important information and work your way down the list
- Keep your paragraphs and sentences short and snappy.
- Insert headings where needed.
- Proofread.

The Question Outline

People who do quick research often rely on this method to shape their notes into simple reports. All you have to do is write a paragraph or two in answer to each question. But be careful, since this doesn't work for every piece of writing you do. In the right situation, it can cut writing time considerably.

- Write the answers to the questions that apply to your task: Who? What? When? How? Why? So What?
- Shuffle the paragraphs into whatever order you feels makes the most sense.
- Add any necessary transition sentences.
- Keep your paragraphs and sentences short and snappy.
- Insert headings where needed.
- Proofread.

Three stage outline: Problem/Background/Recommendation

This is one of the easiest ways to avoid the chronological or "then-this-happened-and-then-this-happened-and-then-that-happened" trap. It is sometimes tempting to communicate the entire history of an incident and neglect to organize the information to help your reader. This method can help you avoid that habit.

- Start the document by stating the problem. Label the section, "Problem" or "Problem Description."
- Spend a paragraph or two catching the reader up on background information. Label the section "Background."
- Suggest a solution or notify the reader of the action you have already taken. Label the section "Recommended Action" or "Action Taken."
- Keep your paragraphs and sentences short and snappy.
- Insert headings where needed.

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Good Writing on the Job

The Place of Writing in Business

Writing is important to the health care business. Estimates of the time people spend writing in a normal workday run upwards of 25%. If we count both the time spent writing and the time spent reading what others have written, the figure is closer to 40%. That is a lot of time and it represents a significant business expense.

When we asked people in one of our classes to keep track of all the things they wrote and read during one work week, they started to do it but then quit. They said the list got so long that keeping a log interferred with their jobs. Imagine that you were the accountant for the hospital and that you had to place a value on the writing that goes on. How much would good writing be worth? How much employee time is involved? Working with one hospital, we helped them revise an admissions form. After working with the new form for several weeks, the admissions representatives said they thought the new form saved their group about two hours per day. What is the value of writing well or poorly?

Poor writing is bad business. It slows down the communication process, causes confusion, and encourages mistakes. Most hospitals are inundated with paperwork. There is just too much paper around–reports are too long, memos too frequent, correspondence too burdensome. When the writing is not only lengthy but bad–filled with mistakes, poorly organized, unclear–writing becomes a hindrance rather than a tool for providing quality care.

Individual Writing in Business Settings

Good writing is important at the individual level. The memos and reports that you write serve the interests of the hospital, but they also serve as a primary means of individual evaluation. It may never be stated outright that you will be evaluated on your written reports or memos, but all too frequently, nobody knows what you did until you put it in writing. The impressions formed of you as a worker, especially by higher-ups who are not in your immediate work setting, are often based on what you write.

Thus writing serves as a key means of job evaluation and plays a large role in decisions concerning promotions and merit raises. Writing serves to establish and maintain an employee's role within a company. And the higher one moves within an organization, the more important and time-consuming writing becomes (at least until one reaches the levels of upper management, when oral communication becomes more important than written). Supervisors write more than line employees; managers writer more than supervisors.

Yet the importance of writing is often not acknowledged. Most employees feel they spend too much time writing, that their writing is weak in one of a dozen ways, that they really need to brush up on the principles of good writing. Employers will complain that they see weaknesses in the writing of others, perhaps lamenting that colleges don't do a better job of training students in essential communication skills. They will also admit that their own writing could be improved.

Many employees do not define themselves as writers or define writing as their work. They attempt to keep writing in a subordinate position, as something they have to do but would rather not. They see writing as a necessary evil associated with their jobs. Writing is a foe, not a friendly tool, a tool closely related to success.

The Need for Writing Training

Writing is a complicated business. Writers need a special language to work with, special techniques for editing others' written language, and special concepts for understanding what makes writing clear, forceful, and effective. Instead of working to gain these specialized competencies, many employees assume they can simply pick up what they need to know as they use the language.

This course attempts to bring the importance of writing to the surface–to talk explicitly about good writing. As an employee, you need to know what counts as good writing, how writers think and work, and how readers respond to your writing. You need to recognize and control grammatical trouble spots and to have a language for doing so. And you need a few terms and some special skills to describe how sentences work, so you can control language and use it effectively.

The Importance of Purpose and Audience

The real key to good writing is a well-developed sense of purpose and audience. Good writing will follow once a writer decides exactly what needs to be accomplished and who can accomplish the task. And often, a clear sense of purpose and audience will prevent problems of grammar and word choice at the sentence level.

The worst kind of writing is that which has no clearly defined purpose or targeted audience. You might read a memo and wonder: "Am I supposed to do something? What is this writer's point? Why am I being told these things?" And often, this kind of writing may have annoying errors or variation in word choice that indicate the writer's uncertainty (or even lack of thought) about purpose and audience.

When you shape a piece of writing around a clearly defined purpose and audience, you give yourself a tool for deciding what to include and what to delete, what to emphasize and what to downplay, and how to order your arguments and evidence. A sharply defined sense of purpose and audience will

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also guide you toward an appropriate strategy and tone. With a clearly defined purpose and audience, you can begin writing to specific individuals with a clear sense of what you would like them to do. You then have a yardstick for editing and revising that lets you measure how well you are communicating your purpose to your audiences.

Multiple Purposes, Multiple Audiences

Most work environments are complicated places, and purposes for writing reflect these complications. A writer will have an obvious purpose for writing, but behind the stated purpose may lie hidden motives of personal advancement, empire building, or efforts to change or influence the organization.

For example, suppose I am a supervisor who has a problem with employees using the photocopier for personal business. If I decide a memo is the best way to handle the situation, this gives me an obvious purpose for writing.

But behind the obvious purpose of stopping unauthorized uses of the machine are other, secondary purposes that make the memo a complicated business. I do not wish to alienate those who haven't used the machine for unauthorized uses. Nor do I wish to make a contest of the problem, challenging people to use the machine without being caught. And I certainly don't want my employees to get the idea that the office will be patrolled by a photocopy police squad. I would like simple cooperation from my employees; I want them to recognize the reasonable nature of my request to stop using the machine for unauthorized copying.

Most writing situations are like this–complicated, multi-faceted, somewhat touchy in their interpersonal complications.

Nor is it a simple matter to define an audience. My memo is directly addressed to those in my office with access to the photocopy machine. Yet there may be other, secondary audiences who see my memo. Perhaps my manager will review my files to evaluate my work. Perhaps I will end up having to discipline an employee who continues to use the photocopier for personal use, so my memo becomes a legal document used as evidence in the proceedings against the employee. Suddenly, new purposes and audiences open up for my "simple" memo. The words I wrote for my initial purpose may suddenly prove inadequate to the new demands on them.

You often cannot predict where a memo will end up, into whose hands it will fall in addition to those named specifically at the top. Every time you decide to copy a memo up or down the organizational hierarchy, you risk appearing to go over someone's head or appearing to be insensitive to office politics. Often, the tone and approach that is right for the primary audience–perhaps a close supervisor–is totally wrong for the secondary audience–perhaps a manager up the line.

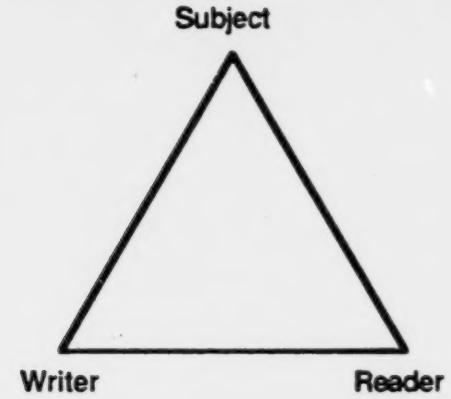
Writing has a permanence that speaking lacks. Once you commit an idea to a paper, it has a life of its own. It ends up in files where you don't expect it and shows up at the wrong time. Before you write, your first step must be to decide

whether to write at all–whether your purpose might not be better realized by telephone or face-to-face communication.

A Communication Model of Writing

Many writers find visualizing the communication situation as a triangle to be helpful in conceptualizing writing tasks:

The Communication Triangle



In this visual representation, the message–what is actually being communicated–is surrounded by those features that shape the message. At one corner is the writer, the one who usually has some purpose for sending a message. The writer sends the message to some reader or audience–represented at a second corner–who has some reason for reading the message. Finally, in the third corner there is the topic: what the message is about. So the writer, the audience, and the topic are closely related, like three corners of the same triangle.

There is more to this representation, however. Note that the writer and reader are connected by one side of the triangle. They don't exist in isolation, but are directly tied in some relationship, represented by the connecting side. Every time you write, you establish a relationship between yourself and your audience. You assume, as a writer, a role of either asking or telling someone to do something, of either cajoling someone into cooperation or threatening someone with undesirable consequences. In other words, you don't simply send messages about the world when you write–you impose a relationship on the receiver of the message. It is in this touchy business of imposing relationships that writers often fail, for their sense of appropriate relations is often at odds with their reader's sense.

The other sides of the triangle represent the writer's understanding of the topic and the reader's understanding of the topic, two understandings which are rarely equal. Sometimes writers get so close to their subjects, they have such thorough

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understandings, that they begin to have trouble imagining what their readers don't understand. They begin using jargon or acronyms (abbreviations by first letters, as in UNIX or ASU) and insider language that their readers have trouble understanding.

The relation between the reader and the topic is especially tricky because it involves not only the reader's actual understanding of and attitude towards the topic, but also the writer's estimate of that understanding and attitude. You know the feeling of reading something where the writer seems to know much more than you do. And as a reader, you may sometimes be alienated by writers who patronize you by assuming that you know less than you really do.

Surrounding the whole triangle is the very messy, complicated world that influences the written text. Deadlines, budgets, outside issues that compete for our attention–all influence the shaping of the message. How messages are produced and delivered, what the reader's frame of mind is, whether a reader actually reads the message–everything in the situation that surrounds a message helps determine its success.

The communication triangle can remind you of the complexity of most writing situations, with its key elements at each corner and the connections between these elements. Writing often feels like a balancing act, trying to achieve an appropriate balance between appearing too bossy or too undecided; between writing as an expert or writing to be fully understood (even by novices); between relying on what readers know and deciding what they need to be told. The triangle, with its geometry of perfect balance, offers you a metaphor of good writing.

Becoming a Good Writer

No book can teach you how to analyze your particular writing situations. To be a good writer–one who responds to the situational demands of particular purposes and audiences–you need all your analytical skills.

You need to be firmly in control of your work situation, understanding what needs to be accomplished and what are efficient strategies for attaining your purposes. You need to be a psychologist, understanding what motivates people and what alienates them. You need to be a manager, responsive to how duties and roles are assigned within your organization. And you need to be a politician, one who understands how to get competing groups to work harmoniously.

To be a good writer, you also need confidence. You need to trust your insight, to believe you have good ideas worth conveying. If you are insecure about the quality of your ideas, anxious about your authority, hesitant about your ability to solve problems through writing, you'll produce writing that is obscure, riddled with jargon, impenetrable, and confusing. Many insecure workers try to hide behind their writing, throwing up smokescreens that obscure and confuse.

Confident workers are confident writers–they articulate problems clearly and offer solutions which will stand on their own merits. Good writers take

responsibility, confident they have ideas others will respect and respond to. Good writers recognize that most business situations are already complicated and don't need language which further complicates matters. Good writers appreciate prose that is lean and efficient, that works hard and gets the job done without a lot of wasted words.

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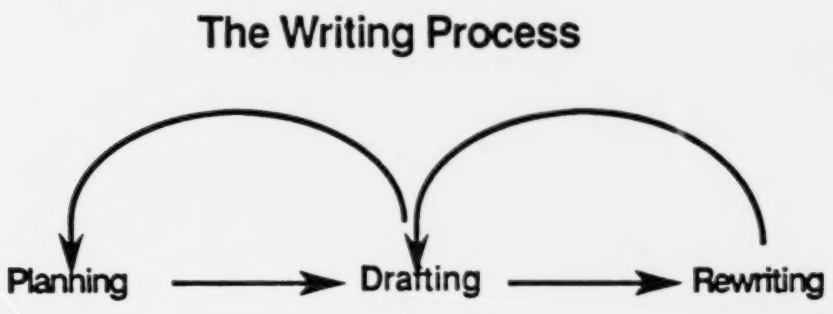
A Model of the Writing Process

Many people think that good writers sit down at a typewriter or word processor and let a document flow letter-perfect onto the page or screen. They themselves can't do this, but they believe that if they were truly good writers they would be able to do so.

In fact, good writing involves a great deal of planning up front before you begin to write, as well as rewriting after you finish a draft. The best writers are those who allot time before and after drafting to include these vitally important activities.

We speak of the writing process as having three stages:

1. **planning** (or prewriting),
2. **drafting** (or composing), and
3. **rewriting** (revising and editing).



Understanding how you can view writing within the model of these stages can help you produce successful documents. Depending on the importance of the document, the amount of time you have to produce it, and your writing experience, you may shortcut some of the activities in each stage. Nevertheless, when you're involved in any of them, you are truly engaged in writing.

The Planning Stage

It is important to have a clearly defined purpose for writing and to adapt your writing to a specific audience. But purpose and audience are only two of the things you need to think about in the planning stage, before you begin to write. You also need to think about the *type* of document you are going to produce--what it typically looks like and how it is typically organized. An internal memo is formatted and organized differently from a piece of external correspondence. You need to think about the *medium* in which the document will be produced--

handwritten, typed, printed in dot matrix or sent through electronic mail. Each of these has a different look and a different impact on the reader. You need to think about what your likely sources of *information* are and how much *time* you have. Time constraints often shape all stages of the planning and writing process.

Finally, you need to think about the *situation* in which you are writing--not just your immediate reason for writing, but the larger political and social situation. What has happened that calls for you to communicate at all? Why have you chosen to do so in writing? Where will your readers be when they read your document and what will they be doing with it?

Purpose, audience, type of document, medium of production, sources of information, available time, and situation are all things you need to think about in the planning stage. To help you plan, we have included a Purpose and Audience Worksheet in the course materials. You might photocopy it and use it each time you begin a new document. Or you might adapt it by changing and adding questions that are more tailored to your work situation. Some of the questions are probably not new to you if you are an experienced writer on the job, but you may not have considered them consciously before.

Creating an Outline

Once you've given some thought to these considerations, you need to continue planning by gathering your information and creating a rough outline. Your outline needn't be formal--you can just jot down the main points you want to make and then, indented beneath each point, sketch a few sub-points or supporting pieces of evidence. Many people find it helpful to create diagrams that show the major points and their connections. Others like upside-down tree structures that show the hierarchy of the document. All the outline really needs to show is the order of points you're going to make, with some indication of what points are more important than others.

All of these planning activities take time. One thing we know from research is that good writers will take up to *half* of their total writing time in planning. Again, the amount of time you spend on these planning activities will depend on the importance and length of your document. It may also depend on whether you've written anything like this before, in which case you'll probably finish your planning faster.

Once you've thought about audience and purpose, gathered your information, and sketched out an outline, you're ready to begin drafting. But before you begin, notice the approach taken here. We're suggesting that you shape your document from the *outside in* (some writers call it *top down*). We're not suggesting you start with sentences on a page and try to build up a successful document word by word and sentence by sentence; instead we think you should begin with external considerations (audience, purpose, situation), and let your decisions there dictate the shape of the document you ultimately produce.

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The Drafting Stage

Many people think that good writers write it right the first time, without having to go back and change anything. But while good writers may get it *pretty good* the first time (and experience helps here, especially previous experience in the type of document you happen to be writing), nobody gets it perfect the first time.

In fact, good writers typically go back and make lots of changes in their documents. But what good writers know is a technique that lets them get a first draft done very quickly. We'll share it with you here: *Good writers separate drafting from rewriting*. That means they don't try to get it perfect the first time; instead, they try to get their material down on the page or screen *before* they worry about cleaning it up.

This simple technique can save you a lot of time, because it allows you to postpone editing and criticizing your writing until you get some ideas roughed out on the page or screen.

There's a good analogy here to building a house. After you lay the foundation for a house--which is essentially what you do in the planning stage of writing--you don't frame one panel of the house, install your wiring and plumbing in the panel, frame in a window, insulate the panel, sheetrock and wallpaper the inside, brick the outside, and then stand back and admire the beginnings of your house. For one thing, you'd be lucky to have all the seams and corners match in the final product. For another, it would be unbelievably expensive to keep calling in your various subcontractors to finish off one panel at a time: they'd all be there every day!

And yet, many people try to draft in just such an inefficient way. They work on one paragraph or section at a time, polishing off that section until they are satisfied enough to go on to the next section. No wonder such writing is so agonizing for its writers, and so choppy to its readers. And on top of being agonizing, such a method of writing is wasteful, because the one paragraph that you spend a long time polishing may end up in the scrap heap when you decide to rewrite.

Getting words on paper or screen will help you feel a sense of accomplishment, which in turn will motivate you to keep working on the document. Seeing words allows you to use your visual intelligence to organize what you have to say and fine tune your writing for your purpose and audience. Getting words down, even if the ideas are poorly organized, can help you think in ways that are just not possible when the ideas are simply milling about inside your head.

The Rewriting Stage

Once you have drafted your text, you are ready to begin rewriting for effectiveness. We'll distinguish between two activities within rewriting:

1) **revising** for large concerns like appropriateness for your audience, clarity of purpose, and overall organization; and

2) **editing**--rewriting to make your sentences and your word choice correct and effective.

So you'll want to first consider how well your document fits with your overall goals:

- Is my purpose clear?
- Is the tone right for my intended audience?
- Have I included the right amount of detail for the level of understanding I want my audience to have?
- Is the overall document organized logically?
- Does the text flow smoothly from section to section?
- Is the text visually appealing? Is it inviting, or does it look forbidding?
- Do I make good use of figures and tables to support my main points?

These questions are the domain of revising. It is a mental challenge to look at the whole document and make large-level decisions about whether it works. But you need to see the big picture before you start the nitty-gritty work of editing--or you'll end up with well-constructed sentences and paragraphs that don't add up to anything for your audience.

When you edit your writing, you need to take a really close look at what you have on the page (and not just what you think *think* you have on the page):

- Have I written complete sentences (not fragments or run-ons)?
- Do my subjects and verbs agree?
- Am I consistent in tense, number, person?
- Have I used correct spelling and punctuation?

One critical piece of advice in rewriting is to *sweat the small stuff last*. By *small stuff*, we mean spelling, punctuation, grammar, and phrasing--all those things that immediately jump out from the page at you when you re-read something you've written.

Sweating the small stuff last means that you should *revise before you edit*. Why is that good advice, when it seems easier to edit the small stuff first? Well, for the same reason that we encouraged you to draft the whole document or section completely before you start rewriting any particular section: Otherwise, you may later find yourself deleting a highly edited, brilliantly written paragraph because it doesn't fit the tone of rest of the document.

Of course, separating revising from editing means that you have to make multiple "passes" through a document when you're rewriting. And that makes sense, because it's difficult to read for both revising and editing concerns at the same time. It takes a lot of concentration to evaluate the logic and organization of a document, so you need to keep reminding yourself of your focus of concern. It's easy to get distracted by details.

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Two Styles of Writing Process

Our discussion of the writing process would be complete at this point if all good writers followed the process the same way. But they don't. So we'll conclude with a discussion of two different styles of writing process, each with its own strengths and corresponding weaknesses. It's important for you to know about this difference, not only in validating your *own* process of writing, but also in understanding those writers around you who have a *different* process.

When researchers first began to study the writing processes of writers on the job, they expected to find that all good writers would follow the same process, devoting the same proportion of time to the same stage of the process. The researchers expected that good writers would all spend about half their writing time in planning, about a fifth in drafting and the remaining third in rewriting.

But when they actually studied the process of good writers on the job, researchers found that writers tended to fall into one of two groups. In the first group were writers who spent a great deal of time planning--even to the point of drafting individual sentences in their minds before they began to write--and then poured out their text in almost final form. These writers--whom we'll call **planner-drafters**--did very little rewriting, because they had already done a good deal of it mentally.

The other group were writers who began to write almost immediately upon receiving an assignment. These writers spent almost no time planning, but instead did a lot of their planning work in the process of refining their message through numerous drafts. We'll call these writers **drafter-rewriters**.

In the following sections we'll look at the strengths and weaknesses of each type. In some ways the strengths and weaknesses of the two types are complementary: the strengths of the planner-drafter turn out to be the weaknesses of the drafter-rewriter, and vice versa.

Planner-Drafter

The planner-drafter's strategy works especially well when he or she is in a hurry, or when the time and patience of information sources are limited. The planner-drafter appreciates the way that advance planning can save time. By doing the planning all at once up front--rather than piecemeal in the drafting and rewriting stages--the planner-drafter is saved from the need to produce an infinite number of rewrites of a document.

However, the planner-drafter has little appreciation for the way that encoding ideas into words can change the shape of ideas, and may look at the drafting stage as a merely mechanical process of "pouring out" the contents of the document onto a page or screen. You're likely to have heard planner-drafters say things like: "I've almost finished that report; all I have to do now is write it." But the planner-drafter may get blocked in drafting when what he or she planned to say just doesn't turn out as expected.

Drafter-Rewriter

The drafter-rewriter, on the other hand, appreciates the way that numerous rewrites can shape and prune a draft. He or she is familiar (and comfortable) with the experience of words not matching ideas, so it is no problem for this writer to put half-formed thoughts and disorganized ideas on paper. The drafter-rewriter also knows that quick drafting is a wonderful tool for discovering new connections and dimensions of ideas as they are put into words.

In contrast to the planner-drafter, the drafter-rewriter has too little appreciation for the way that planning up front can save time and aggravation. The simple truth is that work situations often do not allow a writer the luxury of more than one or two rewrites, so a draft-rewrite strategy with its insistence on multiple rewrites may cause consternation at work.

Writing Styles in a Group Situation

You may recognize not only yourself, but also colleagues from work in these portraits. You may be a planner-drafter supervising a team of drafter-rewriters. When you see hard copy coming off the printer, you think they're close to completion--when in fact they've only begun. And so you begin criticizing details that are really rewriting concerns, not drafting concerns.

Conversely, you may be a drafter-rewriter leader for a team of writers who are all planner-drafters. You are understandably nervous when, three weeks into a six-week project, your team assures you that they are making progress when they haven't yet produced a first draft--coherent or otherwise.

Good writing--following *either* style of writing process--is always hard work, but with practice you can learn to control your writing process and to balance your preferred style with the strengths of the other process style. Knowing how you work best and experimenting with new approaches can give you a sense of control over your work. This control, in turn, can make writing seem like less of a huge, unmanageable chore and more like what it should be--a productive, rewarding part of your career.

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Writing Memos and Short Reports

Writing is one of the ways that you communicate with other people at work. Memos and short reports can help you get things done, call attention to a situation, establish a written record of what happened, propose new ideas, solve problems, accept responsibility for a mistake or take credit for a success.

Writing good memos is one step to becoming a good supervisor or manager. Memos show how well you are thinking about the problems that come up in your job. They also serve as a permanent record of your performance. Most importantly, memos show that you can think clearly and take appropriate action.

Know when to write

Writing is formal and final. If a situation is better handled over the telephone or face-to-face, then take care of it that way. Often it is good to follow up a telephone call with a memo. The important thing is to remember that writing is a permanent record. If you have a good idea, and you want it remembered, writing a memo is one way people won't forget (or at least you can take away their excuse for forgetting).

Writing memos is a way of exercising power: when you write a memo, you record your version of the situation. Often, a single memo is the only written record. You know the phrase that is common in hospitals: "If it's not written down, it didn't happen." When you write, you control what happened.

Use your own words

Don't be afraid to use your own words. If you have an idea about something you work with all the time, then you know enough to write about it. Have confidence in yourself, your ideas and your abilities. Let your message keep you on track. Write it as you would say it. Writing that has a strong individual voice is always better than writing that sounds like a committee composed it.

Some people are hung up on old rules they learned in school. They think it is inappropriate to use contractions (*can't, shouldn't, doesn't*) or to use first person (*I, me, mine, we, us*). They try to make writing formal by following formal rules:

> Do not end a sentence with a preposition.
>
> Do not begin a sentence with *and* or *but*.
>
> Do not split an infinitive.

Unfortunately, these so-called rules are broken all the time by good writers. Such rules are really more distracting than helpful. Keep your eye on the point: What do you want your audience to think and do? Then use language that is appropriate to that audience and your purpose.

Use human actors in familiar contexts

Make your writing active and concrete: people doing things in recognizable situations. Think of writing as drama: actors doing things on a stage. People will understand your writing better and they will remember what you say longer. Try to get your actors on center stage: in the subject position of your sentence.

Instead of saying:	The report of the Safety Committee was found to have problems regarding a lack of compliance with state regulations.
Say	The Risk Manager decided that the Safety Committee report did not comply with state regulations.

Notice how the actor (the Risk Manager) is now the subject (the actor) and the verb carries the action (in the verb phrases *decided* and *did not comply).*

Instead of saying:	It is the decision of this office to support all employees in their pursuit of additional training in life support.
Say	As Patient Care Coordinator, I encourage you to take additional training in life support.

Keep people in your writing and you will be on your way to strong, effective writing.

Keep it short

Say what has to be said. Then stop. Why? Because:

- the reader can see what it's all about, quickly
- short words, sentences, and paragraphs are easier to read
- you get it over with sooner and can get on with the rest of your job

Sometimes shorter words aren't better. Sometimes a detailed description is needed. But most of the time short is best. Make your writing electric by keeping it short.

Some words sound important but mean very simple things. Don't get caught up trying to sound important. In memos, simple is better. Here are some examples.

Replace:	**with:**
activate	start
utilize	use
modification	change
at this point	now
I am of the opinion	I think
due to the fact that	because

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Big words and long sentences slow the reader down. For instance, read these two memos:

To: Supervisor Jenkins

From: Tom Bigtalk

Re: Client slippage

As per our previous communication, we have been addressing the cleansing process in the pedestrian throughways. It has come to my attention in the process of my investigation of client slippage that our maintenance staff is utilizing a cleansing agent that seems to decrease the friction coefficient of the floor tiles. We have tested a different brand of cleansing agent, Sprat, in the south halls and have found it to reduce client slippage. What is more, the new cleansing agent is more cost efficient. I am of the opinion that Brand X would be the wisest choice for our future cleaning necessities.

To: Supervisor Jenkins

From: Tom Straightshooter

Subject: Changing the floor cleaner

We should change brands of floor cleaner. The floor cleaner we use makes the floor slick. I tested our current one against Sprat, and I found that Sprat doesn't make the floor slick and is cheaper. I'll wait to switch until you give me the go ahead.

Thanks.

Which would you rather read? Which would you rather write? Which is easier to understand?

Organize your thoughts

Start your memo with the action. Don't tell a story, or start with background, or give all of the history that lead up to the writing of the memo. If the main message comes first, the words on the page will help shape the rest of your memo.

Make sure your memo clearly tells your reader what to do. Maybe she likes your suggestion, but what does she do next? Does she need to make a phone call? Write another memo? Order 100 boxes of blood?

Don't just end by writing "I hope you like my idea." Show the reader that you have an action agenda: "I plan to suggest the change at next Wednesday's Supervisor's meeting. Please call me at x9109 if we need to discuss anything before then."

Think Visually

Think about the overall visual organization of the page. Use plenty of white space to separate blocks of print or different kinds of information. Allow ample margins, and use headings (even in fairly short documents) to show the reader how your memo or report is organized. Think about the balance of the page– how print is spread around the page. Try to invite your readers to read. Make your text look easy to read.

You might look at the pages in this book. What have we done to try to make the pages visually interesting and to show you the organization of material?

Treat readers like people

Sometimes writers forget what they are doing: communicating with someone else. If you expect people to pay attention to you, give them a reason to care about your idea. Ask yourself: why should my reader care? A lot of good ideas go unnoticed because writers didn't give the people making decisions a reason to care.

Find the bridges between you and your readers. Find the shared concerns. Get outside your own perspective and see the issue from your reader's point of view. Then work from mutual interests.

Use a few extra words to show politeness, cooperation, and mutual support. Be generous in your language. Be a psychologist who knows how to motivate people.

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TO: All Employees
Medical Staff
Auxiliary Members

FROM: Aaron Udall
Vice-President, Professional Services
Gerry Mack
Manager, Security

DATE: November 14, 1992

RE: Elevator Card Access

On the morning of November 19th, we will activate the badge readers on the 2nd floor (Labor and Delivery) and 5th floor (Pediatrics) elevator entrances. At that time those elevators can only be accessed with the use of your ID badges. In order to access the elevator you must:

1. Swipe your ID badge right to left with picture facing up as you have been doing previously when clocking in.

2. Immediately after swiping, press the elevator up button. (If you fail to press the button after swiping, the elevator will not function and it will be necessary to reswipe.) You have four (4) seconds to do this!

3. Enter elevator and press floor desired. We ask that you please inform the Security Department if you have any operational problems with the reader or the elevator itself, so that the information can be passed on to the appropriate department.

As a reminder and for security reasons we ask that you continue to <u>wear</u> your ID badges at all times so that you can access the elevator and provide identification to all staff and visitors.

Please do not lend your card to others or provide access to nonemployees. Thank you for your assistance.

TO: All Employees

FROM: Daniel R. Piper, Vice President, Human Resources

DATE: January 22, 1992

SUBJECT: Planning for Retirement - Seminar

If you are concerned or interested about your financial security after retirement, this workshop will assist you in the planning process. I have attended an identical seminar and found it personally very informative as well as educational.

The workshop will explain how to calculate your pre and post retirement income, your pre and post retirement expenses and describe the many different options that are available for funding the difference.

Though this workshop is sponsored by one of the nation's largest tax deferred annuity companies - no vendors' products will be endorsed or sold. In fact the program and printed materials were developed independently and bought by the sponsoring company.

This program is intended to be purely educational and informative.

Your spouse is invited to join you and participate in the workshop.

MARCH 7 SATURDAY	**CONFERENCE CENTER 10 a.m. - 12**
MARCH 7 SATURDAY	**CONFERENCE CENTER 1 - 3 P.M.**
MARCH 9 MONDAY	**CONFERENCE CENTER 10 a.m. - 12**
MARCH 9 MONDAY	**CONFERENCE CENTER 3 - 5 P.M.**
MARCH 9 MONDAY	**CONFERENCE CENTER 6 - 8 P.M.**

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MEMO TO: Sue Rath, RN
Patient Care Coordinator, ER

FROM: Mary Stanfield, ART
Manager, Medical Records

RE: Trauma Abstracts

Yolanda Arguente recently requested 300+ charts to review for trauma registry. She stated her deadline as mid-August 1992 (one month). Supplying her with these records in a timely manner, to assure that she meets her deadline, necessitates no less than 40 hours overtime for my staff.

If these lists could be provided to me monthly (i.e., provide prior month's list to me by the 15th of the following month), we could absorb this duty into our normal routine and alleviate the overtime expense. I am sure this system would enhance Yolanda's abstract completion as well.

Please consider my recommendation and let me know of your approval.

Thanks!

cc: Robert Strayhorn, VP/Fiscal Services
Sylvia Gonzales, VP/Patient Care Services
Yolanda Arguente , RN, Trauma Registrar

To: Leslie Jaspers
Director of Med/Surg

From: Sally Robinson, Nurse Educator
Educational Services

Date: July 13, 1992

Re: Dress Code

The present med/surg dress code was written in 1987 and needs to be changed. It states: no tennis sloes, white hose only, white shoelaces and white uniforms only.

A large portion of the staff on the med/surg floors violate this policy on a daily basis. These rules are archaic and need to be reviewed and the policy changed to reflect what has become accepted.

An example is the orthopedic floor which wears a combination of purple and white.

July 13, 1992

MEMO TO: Elva Amato
Personnel Manager

FROM: Mary Short
Audit Coordinator

RE: Patient Account Services Dress Code

There is a lack of a written dress code police specific to this department. Yet a code is enforced requiring clothing with sleeves only, stockings mandatory and dress length at knee level or below.

Though a general personnel dress code does exist it does not address these specific items of clothing with exception to nursing personnel and the wearing of stockings.

Most employees are prudent and attempt to express a professional image in the choices they make regarding clothing.

Other departments having as much public contact allow their employees the right of using their individual discretion in the clothing they wear.

I feel that since there is no such policy in written form it should be reexamined by the business office management for appropriateness. Why not enforce rules specific to those who choose not to be discrete or professional rather than making generalized rules affecting all?

I would appreciate a quick response.

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ATTENTION:
ALL PARTICIPANTS SIGNED UP

FOR THE MAY 19, 20AND 21 ACLS

COURSE (NEXT WEEK!) PLEASE MAKE

SURE THAT YOU ARE PLANNING TO

ATTEND THE STATION I BLS TESTING

STATION. THEY ARE SCHEDULED FOR

MONDAY MAY 1 5: 0800- 1 000 ,

TUESDAY MAY 16: 1200-1400,

WEDNESDAY MAY 17: 1530-1730.

IF YOU FAIL TO COMPLY WITH THIS

MANDATORY STATION YOU WILL

NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE CLASS ! ! !

To: Susan Nordstrom, ART
Manager, Medical Records

FROM: Lana Dansk
Discharge Analyst

DATE: July 15, 1992

SUBJECT: Additional Position

Front office employees in Medical Records spend much of their time answering the phones and running errands, thereby reducing productivity on their own jobs. Our department currently has two full-time employees for this function, but they each work only four week-days due to having to cover the week-ends. This leaves only one main phone person on each of the two busiest days in any office, Mondays and Fridays.

St. Jude's Personnel Policy addresses the issue of backup for critical positions. The phone coverage in Medical Records is critical to our own employees and those calling our department, from both inside and outside the hospital. When one of the main phone persons is absent, it puts additional stress on the other employees in the main office. This affects productivity and morale.

Hiring an additional part-time employee with a flexible work schedule would alleviate much of this problem. This employee could work Mondays and Fridays on a regular basis as the back-up phone person, and any additional time Tuesday through Thursday to assist other employees with a heavy work load. This person could also be trained on a few key jobs to help cover when others are on vacation or extended sick leave, keeping in mind that their main function would be phone coverage.

Justification for this position would include an increase in productivity for front office employees, quicker response to phone calls received, and less overtime. Productivity of other employees in the main office should then increase. This should also lessen the burden on management, who often picks up the slack caused by absent employees.

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TO: Fred Paulman
Assistant Administrator, Human Resources

FROM: John Clement
Discharge Analyst

RE: Sick hours conversion

When an employee accrues over 160 sick hours, hospital policy is to automatically convert the hours, example: 2 sick hours to 1 vacation hour, why not 1 sick hour to 2 vacation hours, also, why automatically, why not leave it to the employee as to how many hours they want to convert.

Award the employee for being at work everyday, don't penalize for having a good attendance.

TO: Administrative Officers
Members of the Medical/Dental Staff
Department Managers

FROM: Leanne Welley, RN
Director of Medical/Surgical Service

DATE: July 25, 1992

RE: OFFICE & BEEPER NUMBER

My office is located on 4 West just past the nurse's station. I can be reached at extension 5212 or beeper #301. Please feel free to come by my office or page me if I can be of any assistance to you. I look forward to the opportunity to work with each of you in my role as director.

Thank you.

Date: May 9, 1990

To: Sue Tyler
Manager/Medical Records Department

From: Mary Jo Samson
Director/Maternal Child Services

A new edition of the approved abbreviations and symbols booklet was distributed in March, 1992. This booklet was compiled by the medical records department and signed off by both the Chief of Staff and the Chairman of the Medical Records and Forms Committee.

Unfortunately, the list of revisions was not routed through the Nursing Division prior to publication. There are several commonly used abbreviations which were approved in the prior booklet that were not included in the new edition. In addition, there are abbreviations that Nursing would like to add.

The abbreviations in question are currently in use and so it is imperative that we revise this edition. I would be happy to take the issue to the Nursing Leadership group and to compile the list of changes that need to be made. If you need any clarification of this issue, please do not hesitate to call me.

cc: Sylvia French

Date: May 9, 1992

To: Sam Tyson
Pharmacy Manager

From: Bob James
Pharmacy

Subject: Second Shift Staffing (tech)

The need for added personnel on the second shift has been manifested by the increased work-load.

I would like to suggest that another technician be added to the second shift.

I am available for further discussion of theis matter, when it is covenient for you.

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TO: Maria Montes
Business Office Manager

FROM: Leslie Mining
Supervisor of Cashiers

DATE: July 8, 1992

SUBJECT: Hours of Operation

All Supervisor's and Managers have been requested to cut out as much overtime as possible. At present, the hours for the department are from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The reasons for opening at 7:00 a.m. were so employees could cash checks, the public could pay their bills before going to work, and making change. I recommend the hours changed to 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., after doing a study of the department.

The Hospital has installed an Impact Machine in the front lobby, a mail-drop has been installed by the Cashier window, and, a survey has been done over a long period of time on check cashing, and change given. The outcome is from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m., there is rarely any window activity.

The Cashier that comes in at 6:45 a.m., has to leave by 3:15 p.m. to prevent overtime. That leaves the department extremely shorthanded during the time when window traffic is busiest, and deposits and reports are being made. This requires the Cashiers doing these to be continually interrupted to assist at the window, delaying their duties. If the department opened at 8:00 a.m., the opening Cashier would be there during the busiest times, allowing better coverage for work to be completed on time with accuracy, and overtime kept to a minimum.

I would appreciate your consideration on this matter. Thank you.

PERSONNEL POLICY MANUAL–PER.POLICY #26-1

SECTION: Twenty-six

SUBJECT: Professional Development and Continuing Education Assistance

DATE: 1/1/92

I. PURPOSE

To provide a continuing education program for professional development which will benefit the hospital and advance quality patient care.

II. WHO

Full-time and part-time employees classified as 32 hour-a-week or more.

III. POLICY

A. To reimburse employees for a percentage of the tuition expense for approved courses of study that are completed per this policy.

B. The course(s), as well as the college, university, or school offering the course(s), must be approved by the Personnel Manager and the Department Manager.

IV. GUIDELINES

A. An employee desiring to participate in this program must notify the Personnel Department no later than thirty days after the start of the semester.

This will allow the applicant to know if their course(s) are approved. The Department Manager and the Personnel Manager will review and sign (if approved) the application ensuring it complies with the spirit and intent of this program.

B. Enrollment in the Professional Development Continuing Education Assistance Program is Completed when a copy of the approved Enrollment Notification Form is returned to the employee with the Personnel Manager's and the Department Manager's signatures.

C. An official payment receipt should be delivered to the Personnel Department within thirty (30) days after the start of school.

D. Only payments of tuition and laboratory fees are subject to this reimbursement policy.

E. The employee must be a full-time or an eligible part-time employee during the entire term of the course and for thirty (30) days after its completion. The tuition reimbursement check is processed 30 days after the course ends if the participating employee has preveiously submitted their final grades and is still eligible.

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F. Approved challenge exams and approved courses offered by the public school system and the community college will be reimbursed 100%, subject to the overall maximum.

G. Reimbursement for approved courses will be a percentage of the tuition paid. To qualify for reimbursement, undergraduate and graduate courses must be completed with a grade of "C", or its equivalent.

1. Eligible, full-time, and part-time employees will receive:

a. 60% reimbursement for an undergraduate or graduate school final course grade of "C" or better.

b. up to $200 per semester, and a maximum of $600 per calendar year.

H. Approved courses must have a direct relationship to present or probable future positions at the hospital.

I. Tuition assistance from other sources, including the G.I. Bill, will reduce the hospital's participation dollar for dollar. The program application form requires the applicant to list all sources and amounts of other school-related financial aid.

V. FURTHER ASSISTANCE

Personnel Manager

Performance Appraisal

(These are the categories used by one hospital for performance appraisals. Note that this is not the entire form, only a list of the categories. Use this list to help you think through your memo regarding your own performance during the past twelve months.)

1. JOB KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

A. Has a general knowledge of the general occupational field.

B. Experience and knowledge gained for a specific job.

C. Skills as applicable to the job description.

(In narrative, describe fields of special competence and, as appropriate, comment on developmental progress and needs in current job.)

2. JUDGMENT AND PROBLEM SOLVING

A. Gets to the root of the problem and makes sound recommendations.

B. Foresees probable consequences of actions or recommendations.

C. Can analyze situations, determine issues, gather sufficient facts, weigh alternatives, and arrive at useful conclusions, for making recommendations.

D. Recognizes situations that supervisor should be consulted on or informed of.

3. RESPONSIBILITY AND INDEPENDENCE

A. Can work with success independently.

B. Carries out assignments and follows through.

C. Understands opposing views or obstacles when assigned tasks.

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D. Sees that necessary things get done.

E. Can be depended upon, in terms of presence on the job, punctuality, effective use of time.

F. Accepts responsibility.

4. COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS

A. Speaks well: Organization of ideas, adapting to the listener and situation, clarity of expression.

B. Writes well: Writing is clear, correct, well organized, complete, appropriate.

5. WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

A. Within the department, gets along with co-workers, is a good group worker, considers other points of view.

B. Outside the department, earns respect and cooperation of peers, management officials in other departments or other agencies or the general public.

C. Understands and respects the feelings of co-workers, patients and others.

6. ADAPTABILITY AND CREATIVITY

A. Adapts readily to changes in program direction or in procedures.

B. Displays creativity and originality in attaining work objectives.

C. Gives an extra portion when the job requires.

D. Seeks self improvement and professional growth.

7. EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

A. Uses medical center equipment and supplies safely and economically.

B. Has knowledge of equipment used.

8. SAFETY

A. Demonstrates safe work habits.

B. Knows and adheres to the medical center safety procedures.

C. Is alert to safety hazards and takes initiative in getting them corrected.

SUMMARY Additional facts, specific achievements, strengths, weaknesses, or suggested improvements not covered under previous items.

FOLLOW-UP PLANNED

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Write Stuff Teacher's Guide

Write Stuff was developed by **Step *Ahead***: A Partnership for Improved Health Care Communication. **Step *Ahead*** is funded in large part by the U. S. Department of Education as a National Workplace Literacy Demonstration Project. Our other partners include The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy and seventeen hospitals within the State of New Mexico.

As a demonstration project, we are eager to share these materials with others who are engaged in not-for-profit literacy work. If you would like to use our materials, please write for permission to:

Step *Ahead*
New Mexico State University
Department of English, Box 3E
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88003

505-646-3931

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of our partner organizations and especially wish to thank our many students who told us it really did make a difference.

Revised Nov. 24, 1992

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Dr. Stephen A. Bernhardt and Dr. Paul R. Meyer, Co-Directors

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Introduction

Write Stuff is a basic course in writing developed especially for hospital employees. It is designed to be taught on-site and to complement a hospital's other training and staff development efforts. The topical focus is workplace communication. The emphasis is on memos, but what is taught can easily be applied to short reports and other sorts of writing. For example, a cover memo can introduce a procedure for housekeepers to follow. Or a cover memo can introduce a set of guidelines for labelling and storing cleaning compounds.

Write Stuff is designed as a 16-hour course, with eight two-hour sessions. It can be adapted to other schedules and will frequently be taught on a four four-hour class schedule. The course does not offer university credit, but it has been (or is being) approved for continuing education credit for nurses and other health care professionals in New Mexico.

The course is intended to serve a wide variety of health care workers: nursing assistants, dietary staff, housekeeping staff, patient account representatives, medical technicians, nurses, supervisors, low-level supervisors, and other hospital employees. Teachers of the course are encouraged to adapt the course to various mixes of these audiences.

This **teacher's guide** is intended as an aid to teachers of the course, both to those teaching for **Step *Ahead*** and others who may be using our materials in other locations. It explains the philosophy of the course, offers some sample lesson plans, and describes how teachers can adapt the course to make it more work-related and more responsive to different audiences.

Write Stuff was developed by Paul Meyer and Stephen Bernhardt of New Mexico State University as part of **Step *Ahead***, a Workplace Literacy Demonstration Project funded primarily by the U. S. Department of Education. **Step *Ahead*** develops and offers short courses in basic skills to employees in New Mexico hospitals. Courses focus on reading, writing, oral communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. **Step *Ahead*** also works with the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy and local literacy groups to establish workplace-related tutoring efforts on site in the workplace.

Philosophy of Write Stuff

Write Stuff is based on the premise that all health care workers need good written communication skills. We believe that improving workers' communication skills benefits a hospital, its employees, and its patients. It results in better morale, improved teamwork, and increased efficiency in the hospital. Better communication skills help workers do their jobs better, makes their work more pleasant, and improves their chances for advancement within the hospital. Better communication also results directly in improved patient care. It reduces risk and eliminates costly mistakes and do-overs.

The **Write Stuff** is based upon rhetorical theory. The course emphasizes that writers need to be able to understand particular writing situations, and it encourages writers to define their purposes and audiences. It encourages writers to think about what sort of action they hope to accomplish when they sit down to write.

The **Write Stuff** focuses on helping participants develop control over their own writing processes. Discussion and exercises take students through the writing process: analyzing the situation, gathering crucial information, organizing and drafting a text, and then revising and editing.

We view writing as partly individual and partly social. We don't have much time with these employees, but if we can give them ways to think about writing in their work groups and ways to productively interact with other writers in their work groups, then our effects can be long lasting. We are planting seeds that we hope will grow in our absence.

The course does not have the time to be a grammar and vocabulary workshop. We want to get people writing from the top-down, getting the most important issues clearly in their minds. If a writer has a sure sense of purpose, audience, and situation, then the writing is likely to be successful.

Write Stuff uses class discussion, homework activities and peer evaluation to teach participants about written communication and to help them sharpen their skills. The course is meant to be active, with students asking questions, contributing samples of writing from their workplace, and bringing to the table issues that affect them on a daily basis. We rely on collaborative revision. We also depend on class discussion to drive much of the learning in the classroom.

The teacher needs to stress that good writing is more often learned than taught. What students learn will relate directly to how much energy and attention they give the course, both in class and at home or on the job. Students are expected to read and respond to assigned readings. The teacher needs to stress that the assignments will take time People taking the course need to agree to undertake the effort. It costs a lot of money to deliver these courses–students who don't do the work or attend sporadically waste a valuable resource.

All questions are always relevant–big and small. People think about things unrelated to the day's lesson, and we think it is important to attend to whatever

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questions come up. The teachers should try to be clear and correct in matters, for example, of grammar and punctuation. The teacher can always say: "I don't know. Let's look it up." Or "Why don't we see if we can find the answer in a handbook?" The teachers should be sure a dictionary and a handbook of grammar and style are on hand.

Write Stuff was tested and revised in a hospital setting. Nurses, nursing assistants, patient account representatives, physical and respiratory therapists, secretaries, ward clerks, transcribers, pharmacists, technicians, physical plant workers, cafeteria workers, housekeepers, supervisors, managers, security guards, emergency medical technicians, and paramedics have taken the course and provided us with feedback for revising it and making it more relevant to their jobs.

Course goals

Participant Goals

Write Stuff is designed to improve the writing skills of participants. Specific goals are listed on page 1 of the coursebook. Participants can add goals for themselves.

Participants should feel that they have benefited from the course. Instructors should pay close attention to course evaluations to see whether participant goals are being met, and should revise the way they teach the course as seems reasonable.

Instructor Role

Most of the time, **Write Stuff** is taught by a team of two instructors: a lead instructor and an assistant. Two instructors can do a more thorough job of covering the material and allow the class to be divided so that activities like role-playing can be done more efficiently. This is also our primary way of developing new instructors. Assistant instructors learn how to teach the course by working with a master teacher. Two instructors also provide interest for the students, and the inevitable disagreements between the two instructors about particular issues in writing can lead to productive class discussion about what good writing is and how to achieve it.

Instructors should try to achieve good attendance levels and full group participation. They should try to get each participant to do the reading and writing assignments. They should encourage employees to apply the course materials at home and on the job. Instructors should try to bring participants work and life experience into the class. To the extent possible, instructors should adapt the course to the particular audience they are teaching. Instructors should also maintain good records. They should make sure to administer and collect pre- and post-tests and course evaluations.

When problems arise, **Step *Ahead*** instructors should talk with the project coordinators (Bernhardt and Meyer) and/or with the hospital coordinator. Sometimes it might help resolve some issue by meeting with the employee and the employee's supervisor. Generally, problem situations are delicate and it is best to get some advice before moving too quickly. We try to respect employee confidences–we never want to be perceived as reporting on bad behavior to supervisors.

Instructors need to convey enthusiasm and belief in the worth and the potential of the students. Many of the outcomes of our instruction have to do with somewhat subjective goals: enhanced self esteem, lessened anxiety about writing on the job, and a belief that good writing is something to work toward. The course should lead to good feelings toward others in the hospital and a sense that improvement is possible through teamwork.

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The instructors should be personable and animated, displaying a good sense of humor and a genuine interest in the students' well being. Instructors should be professional. As representatives of NMSU, instructors should dress professionally, use professional language, and exercise professional decorum.

When people rate workplace instruction, their first concern is whether the presentations were entertaining and interesting. Try to be both.

Instructors should act in ways that reflect the best interests of the hospital and its staff. They should refrain from damaging personal gossip and they should try to encourage students to act in ways that support the best interests of the hospital. In our classes, information always arises that could be damaging to other workers, to the hospital, or to the relation of hospital to community. In such situations, both the privacy of the workers and the interests of the hospital should be protected. Instructors cannot allow themselves to align with employees against the management of the hospital. Instructors should resist classroom talk that forces dividing lines between workers and management. The rhetoric of the writing classroom and the rhetoric of **Step *Ahead*** in general should foster identification of employee goals with a successful hospital enterprise. We should encourage employees to use their communication skills in active ways to bring about improved health care, but this needn't be construed as employees vs. the hospital. We are in the buisness of using communication to foster cooperation, coordination, and good interpersonal relations.

It is the teacher's job to keep the class talk professional and productive. No good purpose is served by trashing a fellow worker with loose talk in class. When in doubt about what to do with information learned in class, talk with one of the project coordinators (Meyer or Bernhardt) or with the hospital **Step *Ahead*** coordinator.

Evaluation

Students will fill out a course evaluation form specifically targeted at what they learned in the **Write Stuff**. They may also complete a second standard course evaluation questionnaire from the hospital. Be sure to know what the situation is and be prepared to administer required evaluations.

Student writing will be evaluated on inclass pre- and post-test memos written under time pressure. These will be scored for the presence or absence of specific features that reflect what is taught in the course:

Does the memo have a clearly stated purpose or action agenda?

Is it appropriate to the intended audience?

Is there sufficient supporting information?

Is it well formatted?

Is the style active and direct?

Is it relatively free of grammatical errors and misspellings?

Part of the instructor's job in evaluation is to make students feel comfortable with completing writing samples that are intended to help us evaluate course effectiveness. Work to relieve anxiety. And be organized when you administer and collect the samples.

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Course Preparation and Materials Checklist

Confirm on-site arrangements:

- Room: seating, tables, eraser or blackboard, flip chart, overhead, extension cord
- Class roster with names, departments, and extensions
- Refreshments
- Access (especially if the class starts early or late)

Materials

- Books
- Teacher's Guide
- Transparencies: prepared and blank
- Tent cards for names
- Pre- and Post-test forms/prompts
- Daily evaluation forms for CE credit
- Supplementary books: dictionary, handbook, hospital docs
- Transparency pens, eraser board markers, magic markers, flip chart markers, regular pens, paper

Sample Daily Lesson Plans

The following lesson plans are provided as an aid to help teachers plan and budget class time. They do not have to be followed slavishly but do give teachers a good idea of how class time is meant to be spent. Each lesson plan has a brief narrative description of class activities and goals and a temporal outline or plan. Each plan assumes a two-hour class session, for the purposes of exemplification, we assume it takes place from 10:00 to 12:00. Typically, the course will be teamtaught. The team should meet before class and decide who has leadership responsibility for each activity. Some activities work well if one person writes at the board or on a flip chart while the other fields input from the class. Teachers should adapt these lesson plans to their own situations.

Class 1 Introduction to course. What is good writing?

9:45 Instructors arrive. Get attendance sheets. Set up room. Make sure the overhead works, that there is chalk, pens, or whatever is needed. Greet and talk with students as they arrive.

10:00 Distribute name tags, with first names in large print.

10:10 Instructor introductions. Gives a brief overview of the course. Show organization of materials and talk about writing assignments. Ask students to begin thinking now about responses to writing assignments.

10:20 Have participants introduce themselves. Ask such questions of individuals as:

- How much time do you spend each day writing?
- Do you like to write?
- What makes you uncomfortable about writing?
- What is it like writing for other hospital employees?

10:35 Have participants write pre-test memo (either Safety Memo or Quality Memo, using one as pretest for whole group and the other topic as post-test on Day 7).

Tell students that we want to collect a sample of their writing on this first day and that we will use it on the last day to help them judge their own learning and to help us evaluate the class. Tell them we will do a similar memo later in the course.

Hand out the prompt and paper, read the prompt and answer questions. Allow 20 minutes free and clear for writing. Collect papers.

11:05 Break for 10 mintues.

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11:15 Discuss course goals (p. 1). Participants are asked to volunteer goals to supplement those listed in the coursebook. Add goals to overhead transparency.

11:25 Discuss communication triangle. Use transparencies to work around the triangle. Invite participants to volunteer examples from their work experience. Call attention to the sample memos (p. 35 ff.). Work to apply the features of good writing identified above to specific memos.

11:40 Prepare for Assignment 1. Get people to identify possible problems they could write about. Ask if anyone has written a similar memo in the past. Ask what such a memo would look like. How would it be organized? Look especially at the samples memos that identify problems.

11:55 Assign homework and preview next class. Ask them to read through the sample memos. Look for examples of good and bad practices. Ask them to read again through the assignments and begin making notes about what they will choose to write about.

After class: Make copies of the pre-test memos. Be sure names are on the memos. Save for Day 7.

Class 2 Audience and Purpose

10:00 Discuss homework. What memos provide good models? What memos could be improved? How did the writing assignment go? What was hard? Was it easy? Collect. Return the next class with commentary

10:25 Work with the group to identify differences between writing and speaking. Use the transparency to explore the topic. Why write? When is it better than speaking? What about styles and levels of formality? What is an appropriate workplace style?

10:50 Prepare for Assignment #2. Examine the tuition reimbursement policy. Identify the kinds of content that would be included in such a memo. Rehearse the Purpose and Audience Worksheet, either orally or in writing as preparation for writing.

11:00 Break

11:10 Begin writing assignment in class.

11:30 Stop the writing and discuss problems, solutions, strategies, content, tone.

11:45 Preview the reading assignment: "Good Writing on the Job" (p. 19). Look at headings, first lines of paragraphs, decide what the writing is about. Teach efficient reading strategies and get the people involved in the reading.

11:50 Assign homework: finish the memo. Read the essay.

11:55 Turn attention to "Points to Remember" (p. 2). Have each student fill in two or three important ideas from the first two class sessions–things that are really worth remembering. Maybe they were in the readings, or something a student said or thought, or something the instructor said. Have students record at least two ideas before leaving.

Class 3 Overview: The Writing Process

10:00 Discuss the reading assignment. Did it make sense? Was there material worth remembering? Tell them we will use the assignment later in class.

10:20 Discuss the writing process (p. 8, see transparency). Discuss the difference between writing as process and writing as product. Emphasize the process perspective–process as a way to relieve writer's block. Individuals might draw a diagram of how they write–what they do first, second, and so on. Then compare to model. Discuss importance of planning and researching. Tie to assignment 2 and the need to understand the policy and its requirements.

10:50 Break

11:00 Initiate peer review of Assignment 2. Look at "Reviewing the Writing of Others" (p. 15). Change the rules for the first part. Instead of reading the other's writing, have the author read to the group. Then follow the instructions on the sheet. If useful, have the author re-read the memo.

11:10 Break into groups of 3 or 4. Try to get around to each person's writing.

11:45 Discuss who did something particularly well. Move discussion toward assignment for next session: to revise and edit the memo so it is ready to turn in. Who intends to make revisions? What do we think about when we try to revise? How clear is the purpose? Are all the details in order? Is it appropriate to the audience?

11:55 Preview reading "A Model of the Writing Process" (p. 25). Assign revision of tuition memo.

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Class 4 Planning and Drafting

10:00 Collect assignments and lead discussion of reading.

10:15 Discuss topic of planning. Are there parallels between planning writing and planning medical procedures? How much time should someone spend planning? What are some planning behaviors they find productive? In this session, we will review some planning strategies that may be productive for one person, maybe not for another. But this is a chance to try new behaviors.

10:30 Start people on worksheet Planner/Drafters vs. Drafter/Rewriters (p. 9). Think about how you typically write, or think back to how you wrote in school if you don't do much writing now. Compare answers with your neighbor. What are advantages of planning? What are disadvantages of compulsive planning? What are advantages of freely drafting, knowing that revision is inevitable?

10:50 If time permits, ask people to complete the Pie Chart (p. 10), thinking about the memo they composed. Is planning time really writing? Is procrastination productive? Why should we leave time for revision?

Break?

11:00 Introduce "Some Planning Strategies" (p. 11). Try several of the strategies with the group. Work around Assignment #3. Have someone identify a problem in their workplace that they might fix with a memo. Then brainstorm the topic, or cluster it, or ask structured questions.

11:30 Discuss "Drafting Strategies" (p. 13). Ask who has used these strategies. Identify appealing strategies. Point out that these might be useful for longer writing tasks.

11:50 Assign #3 for next meeting. No reading.

11:55 Points to Remember (p. 2). Fill in 2-3 from this week.

Class 5 Reviewing

10:00 Review topics from previous classes. Ask if they used the purpose and audience worksheet or any of the planning or drafting strategies in completing their memo. How do they think about composing now? Is it different from when they first came into the class? Does the word "process" seem helpful or meaningful? Try to reinforce the learning up to this point. Try to get students to articulate principles of course.

10:20 Return Assignment #2. Talk individually–interpret comments, praise good efforts, call attention to memos that are well done. A really good memo might be read together or looked at on an overhead (with the writer's permission, of course.) Return to issues of clear purpose, audience appropriateness, and action agendas.

10:40 Initiate peer revision of Assignment #3. Follow same procedures as in previous review session. Work in groups of 3-4.

Break?

11:20 Regroup class and debrief from peer review. What was helpful? Who is writing well? What did you learn that you can now apply?

11:40 Have people start revising in class. Instructors circulate and provide individual feedback.

11:50 Preview the reading for next time: "Writing Memos and Short Reports" (p. 35). Finish revising and have Assignment #3 ready to turn in for next class.

Class 6 Revising and Editing

10:00 Discuss reading: "Writing Memos and Short Reports" (p. 35). Again, applying what is in the reading to sample hospital memos would be a good way to use the reading. Don't collect Assignment #3 yet, since you can use it during class.

10:15 Discuss "Revising and Editing Checklist" (p. 14). Try to distinguish revising from editing.

Revising can mean attending to larger level concerns of:

scope: how much does it cover?
purpose: what is it trying to do? what is the action agenda?
audience adapation: who will read it and does it take into account what they know and feel?
strategy: what is the approach? is it likely to work?
organization: what are the parts? how are they ordered? is the order effective for the reader?

Editing can mean fixing the small stuff (it's still important, but can be left until late in the process–talk about why).

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As a group activity, make multiple passes through Assignment #3 for different revising and editing concerns. For example, first pass through looking for the action agenda, then pass through looking for adequate support. Then pass through looking for clear sentences. Then for punctuation. Then spelling. This can take as much class time as is profitable and as long as interest is maintained.

10:40 A good explanation of the difference between passive and active sentences would be useful. As would attention to S-V-O (Subject-Verb-Object–the simplest and easiest-to-read word order for English sentences). You might have people look at the grammatical subjects of their sentences. Is the subject the actor?

You might try a common sense approach to grammatical analysis:

Is it clear what the action is? (typically the verb structure)
Is it clear who is doing the action? (it is desirable to have the doer of the action–the actor–in the subject position)
Does the sentence make clear who (subject) is doing what (verb) to whom (object)?

An important grammatical distinction rests on the passive/active transformation. For example:

The radiology department created a new form. (active)

A new form was created by the radiology department. (passive)

There's no way to give a complete grammar review here. But some attention is useful. Maybe solicit action-oriented sentences. You might have students offer one from each memo, to write on the board or on an overhead. Convert several from active to passive, or vice versa. Have people look for a sentence in their document that does not specify who is doing what to whom. Then try rewriting for effect.

11:00 Break?

11:10 If time permits, play with the ambiguous sentences on the transparency of newspaper funny headlines. Try to locate the ambiguities and fix them. Talk about how language is slippery, and what seems clear to you may be read in some other way by someone else.

11:20 Discuss Assignment #4. What sorts of information should be included (brainstorm or cluster on board). Why should someone prepare such a memo? How could it be used? What should be the balance of self criticism and praise? how could it be organized? Should it include specific goals for improvement? Should there be any evidence attached? Try to get a good start on the assignment. It is very difficult for most people to do this assignment. They are uncomfortable evaluating their own performance.

11:50 Fill out "Points to Remember." Remind about next assignment.

Class 7 Writing under Pressure

10:00 Discuss Quick Writing tips. Have class members share strategies for writing under pressure. Ask which of the stages of the writing process can be short circuited. Ask people how they handle pressure.

10:20 Post-test memo: Tell students that we now want to collect a sample of their writing (similar to what they wrote the first day). Remind them that we will use it on the last day to help them judge their own learning and to help us evaluate the class.

Hand out the prompt and paper, read the prompt and answer questions. Allow 20 minutes free and clear for writing. Collect papers.

10:50 Debrief: what are some of the difficulties of writing under pressure? How did they manage this assignment? When it is necessary to make the writing process work within time constraints, how can it be made productive?

11:00 Break

11:10 Review Assignment #4 in pairs: gather two or three peer reviews in preparation for revising as homework. Encourage them to get really tough, and to review at various levels (organization, strategy, evidence, paragraphing, visual design, sentence and punctuation).

11:45 Assign homework: Revise Assignment #4 to be turned in at last class. Ask what they learned during peer review earlier in the period. Tell them this is the hardest assignment and that they should try to bring to bear everything they have learned.

Outside Make clean copies of the inclass memo to keep for evaluation purposes. Make sure names are clear. Match and organize the two sets.

Class 8 Wrapping up. Evaluating Course.

10:00 Discuss Memo # 4 revision. Discuss as a class the difficulties of writing a memo on one's own accomplishments or shortcomings. Provide some time so each class member can read 2-3 other memos from people in the class. Encourage them to compliment each other on what they are doing well. Have people read strong sentences, strong statements of purpose, strong use of evidence, strong paragraphs.

Collect the memos. Tell them they will be returned with commentary. Tell them we will make and keep a copy to help us evaluate the success of the course.

10:30 Return inclass pre- and post-tests. Give them time to read 2-3 of the other students' memos. Answer any questions.What can they see in these memos now that they have had the course? What would they do differently? What have they learned that they could apply to revise the

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memo? Use this to stimulate review of course materials. Combine with next activity if it makes sense.

10:45 Review course. Have class members in turn explain the importance of purpose and audience, the writing process, revision and editing, peer review.

11:15 Break–talk–relax.

11:30 Fill in "Points to Remember" for the final time. Go around the group and have them contribute to an overall list on a transparency. Ask how they can put the course into effect in their work environments. Ask to name one thing they will do differently when they go back to work. Ask whether they have already noticed any changes in how they think and write on the job.

11:45 Fill out course evaluation and collect. Share warm fuzzies. Ask how they feel. Find out what they think should be done differently. Say bye-bye.

Four 4-Hour Class Schedule

See above for explanation. This schedule names activities without describing.

Class 1 Good Writing

Set up room, name tags

Introductions

Course Goals

What is good writing?

Pre test

Break

Debrief from pretest

Communication Triangle

Sample memos-in small groups, identify good and bad

Discuss Audience and Purpose

Use planning sheet

Assignment 1 (change in work procedure within group) planning as full class and drafting individually

Discuss problems with Assignment 1

Preview reading assignment--skim the piece

points to remember

Homework: finish memo 1 and read "Good Writing on the Job"

Class 2 The Writing Process: Planning and Drafting

Review Writing on the Job: Talk some more about their perception of writing in the hospital; relation of writing to supervision

Discuss writing process; do related activities

Peer review of homework memo in dyads or triads

Discuss and do exercises with Planning activities

Start on second memo draft (freewrite?): choice of #2 (policy change) or #3 (tuition reimburse)

Points to remember

Homework: Revise first assignment using peer feedback

Draft second assignment

Read "A Model of the Writing Process"

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Class 3 The Writing Process: Revising and Editing

Review of course: how did they do the homework memo? did the use the planning worksheet?

Return writing from previous session with comments

Revising and editing checklist

Peer revision of 2nd memo

Take assignment 3 through the stages--serious planning and organizing

Draft 3 in class

Debrief writing process for 3

work some on sentence structure if time allows

Points to remember

Preread "Writing Memos and Short Reports"

Class 4 Writing under Pressure; Summing Up

Review Reading

Revise homework memo: self assessment

Strong sentences

Writing underpressure

post test memo

Review pretest

Being a writer: what does it take to continue learning?

Points to remember

course evaluation

certificates

Follow-up:

Respond to whatever writing the students give you and be sure to return the writing to the employees soon after the course ends. Make arrangements with the hospital coordinator to get the assignments back to the people.

Make sure all record keeping is complete: attendance, all papers returned, obligations finished.

Turn in to Bruce, Paul or Steve packs of copied papers: inclass pre- and post-tests. Note on each pack how many students in class and how many completed pairs of pre and post. Arrange the materials and make sure names are legible. Try to give us useful data.

Customizing the course

- Do what you feel is helpful to the participants. Encourage them to bring in samples of their writing. Offer to look over their reports, instructions, evaluations, or other written materials from their jobs. Offer to give them help with things they need to write for their job or for their classes or personal lives.
- Encourage interaction: be a friend to the students. Develop a good friendly atmosphere in class. Do everything you can to create a comfort zone for good writing.
- Use praise liberally and criticism judiciously. When marking papers, be sure to offer plenty of compliments: on the format, on particular words or sentences, on paragraphs that are well developed. Make a list of good sentences and share them with the class. Suggest alternative ways of writing, rather than right ways and wrong ways.
- Encourage people to tell their stories: what was it like to write for school? Is there a difference at the hospital? Who writes poetry? Who accomplished something by writing well? Who writes with their children? Who writes well at the hospital? What do they like to read? We're in the business of creating strong values for good communication. Personalize the class.
- If you encounter a good writer from the hospital or a supervisor who believes in good writing, have him or her come to class and talk for a half hour about how to write well in a hospital environment.
- Getting good work from busy people is a challenge. Your role is to persuade, cajole, pressure, encourage, and praise people for doing the assignments, reading the readings, participating energetically.

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Record Keeping

- Keep good daily records of attendance. Work out the recording methods with the hospital coordinator.
- Keep up with the course. Return papers at the next period after they are turned in.
- Make good copies of the two writing samples we will use for evaluation. Give written feedback on the post test to the students. Use the pretest during the last session to talk about what they would do differently. Organize the copies, make sure names are on them, and try to get everyone to turn in the samples.
- Keep notes on how the course goes. If there is too much to accomplish, figure out how to get back on track. Let us know if you think we expect too much on one day and not enough on the other. Let us know about errors in the materials, unforseen problems, or areas we could improve.